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BROWNING

BROWNING

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES,
APPRECIATIONS, AND SELECTIONS FROM HIS
"FIFTY MEN AND WOMEN"

BY
PAULINE LEAVENS
President of The New York Browning Society

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TO
E. L. B.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

This Marriage
was
solemnized
between us.

Robert Browning
Isabel Devot Norton Band

Facsimile of entry in the Register of the Parish Church of St. Marylebone, Sept. 12th 1846.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

BROWNING was born to the purple—not to the ecclesiastical, nor the “gaudy gold, hard food for Midas,” nor to the transitory crown of kings; but to the royal kingdom of Poetry, that luminous realm where God works, and man understands.

In his childhood’s home, religion, poetry, art, music were the daily life of the spirit. And love was there also, made manifest in fullness, and the overflowing beauty of nature all about that pleasant home gave the responsive child, and later the man, abundant opportunity to hold communion with her visible forms, for it was in the love of nature he ever looked and listened. Then, with a natural child-love for bird and beast, he made friends with all possible specimens, and brought them home to a sympathetic mother who was his confidant. Later, they watched together the spider, that “extraordinarily fine fellow which spun its marvelous web over his desk,” as he wrote *Bells and Pomegranates*. Later still it was, with his arm around her as was his custom whenever near, that he told her the secret of secrets, that he was going to elope with Elizabeth Barrett. To the end of his life he never

ceased to be interested in all living things, and in his last summer he whistled encouragingly to the lizards on the picturesque walls of Asolo as he had done fifty years before.

When about five years old he wrote verses in imitation of Ossian, and "laid them up for posterity under the cushion of a great arm-chair," and it was at this period that his father who "was a scholar and knew Greek," taught him the Homeric poems and illustrated them with genuine moving pictures. The architecture of Troy was indicated by chairs and table, the cat impersonating the all-bewitching Helen, the pony standing in the stable aptly signified Achilles, meditating upon himself, while Towser and Tray represented Agamemnon and Menelaus. The page-boy stood for Hector, and little Robert perched a-top the citadel enacting the part of Priam, "proud father of fifty sons," who had an eye single for the indiscreet Paris supposed to be immured under the footstool.

Carlyle once confided to a friend that he thought of writing a life of Michael Angelo, and "mind ye, I'll no' say much about his art!" It would be quite as difficult to detach Browning from his poetry as Michael Angelo from his art. Before Browning was twenty years of age he had determined that poetry should be the art thru which he would express his convictions, and he met with the sympathy of his father in this, who would gladly give his son the

opportunity of doing what had been denied himself. Browning always remembered this with the deepest gratitude. The home library consisted of six thousand books with many valuable drawings and pictures. Robert Browning, Senior, had a Dutch bias for pictures, and his son an Italian, hence the communion in that phase of art was not as complete as in Greek literature.

The modern poets that came into Browning's reading at this time, exercising a strong influence, were Byron, Keats, and Shelley, especially the last. But a few years before, in that classic land where the "light waves lisp 'Greece'" Byron had said his last words, "now I go to sleep," and his body had been refused burial in Westminster Abbey, and was laid in the family vault at Hucknell. The heart of Shelley had been torn from his burning body by Trelawny, while Byron and Leigh Hunt stood near, and buried under the cypresses in Rome.

Atropos had cut the frail cord that held Keats to this earth life and his body was laid in the same cemetery. Shelley had some new ideas on sociology, and was indulging in higher criticism—more dangerous then even than now. Naturally Browning's young inquiring mind laid hold on these to his detriment, seemingly, for a while, but he acknowledged later that he had not read him aright. "Shelley opened up for this young and enthusiastic follower new vistas leading

toward the Infinite, toward the unattainable best," says Professor Dowden.

Pauline was the first poem put into the current of publication. It was original in form, filled with minute description of nature seen thru the eyes of devotee, and felt in the heart of the lover. It taxed the intellect. There are those who think poetry must either soothe or make you weep—and some of it does. *Pauline* was not a good "seller," and when Elizabeth Barrett wrote about sending to the bookseller for a copy, Browning smiled in glorious security, he having all of those unsold, which meant most of them, at the house-top. It was thirty years before he publicly acknowledged the authorship. Only a few years ago one stray copy brought three hundred and twenty-five guineas at a sale in London.

Paracelsus, full of "erudition turned into poetry," came next on the current; then *Sordello*, *Pippa Passes*, *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, many *Bells* and *Pomegranates*—and Browning was sitting among the gods, youngest of them all. Carlyle was there, and Dickens, Tennyson, Thackeray, Mill, Hunt, Wordsworth and Landor.

In the meantime, Browning had made his first trip into Italy to get local color for *Sordello*—which was well outlined before he went—and an idea, for what afterward became *Pippa Passes*. He went direct to Trieste, "then one step just from sea to land," and found Asolo; and all who know Browning know Pippa

and Sordello—for different reasons—and that it was in Asolo that dear little Pippa sang out her happy heart and touched so many lives, and the beautiful and irresistible Palma led Sordello a willing captive.

Asolo is a little city set among the hills long before Rome was, but now the crumbling walls, the ruined fortress, Queen Canaro's Castle, the arcaded streets do but suggest the ancient grandeur. The silk industry was long ago taken nearer to railroad centres, but one mill is still running, and the one where Pippa "wound silk all day long to earn just bread and milk" has been converted into a Lace-School, and these are now social and economic centres, to both of which Mr. Robert Barrett Browning gives financial support in loving memory of his father. He also purchased the building so long desired by Browning, and it is called Pippa's Tower, and from this the beauty of the surrounding nature is unsurpassed; it is a sweet, tender poem that pulls at your heart-strings, enters your being, and compels the knowledge that you are an inseparable part of the Great Maker of all this harmony. Asolo is easily accessible from Venice; and the Antique Inn offers a cordial welcome, a delicious cup of coffee, and a diminutive register where you may enroll your name among the elect who seek this shrine.

Browning made a second trip to Italy, and was planning another with no premonition that he was standing in the gracious shadow of an all-important

event that was coming on apace. Of this we learn in the published "Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett," and there we read one of the sweetest love stories ever told, and feel the deepest gratitude that this sacred privilege is ours. But had they been given to us by any other hand we would feel that we merited the reproof Browning gives to the "foolish crowd of rushers-in upon genius who come and eat their bread and cheese on the high altar, and talk of reverence without one of its surest instincts—never quiet till they cut their initials on the cheek of the Medicean Venus to prove they worship her." It is an interesting point to note in these letters that Elizabeth Barrett's excel Browning's in erudition, and her lively sense of humor and exceedingly keen wit throws him quite into the penumbra—as a writer of letters.

All the world knows the romantic beginning and ending of this correspondence, and of the memorable day when they met each other—for the first time outside her father's house—and were married in Marylebone Church, not to meet again for a week, when they started for Italy, leaving a brief announcement of their marriage in the daily papers.

This event held attention far beyond the traditional nine days. For these dwellers on Parnassus to follow the example of Jessica and Lorenzo was indeed worthy of attention! Wordsworth said: "So Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett are gone off

together. Well, I hope they understand each other, no one else could." This reminds us of Browning's opinion, given confidentially, that he would go a great distance to see a curl of Byron's hair or one of his gloves, yet could not get up enthusiasm enough to cross the room if Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey were all enshrined in the little china bottle within the limit of his vision. Mr. and Mrs. Browning stayed a few days in Paris, and on by charming degrees to Pisa for the winter, Wilson and the ubiquitous Flush in attendance. When Browning was asked by Miss Barrett if Flush might go to the "Siren's Isle" with them, his affirmative answer came promptly back expressing a wonder that she ever had an approximation to a doubt about it. Was ever little dog so favored?

With the exception of an occasional trip to Paris and London, the fifteen years of their ideal companionship was spent in Italy. "Casa Guidi" in Florence is made famous by them. Here the "King of the Mystics" and the "Daughter of Grecian Genius" lived a comparatively secluded life, yet with a sympathetic hand on the pulse of humanity, for never were poets or statesmen more vitally interested in the political and sociological issues of all nations, yet none ever rose higher into the realms of the ideal. Mrs. Jameson, who met them in Paris, wrote: "I know not how these two poet heads and poet hearts will get on in this prosaic world;" but how extremely well they did

"get on" has been told in many ways. Economy was often a necessary consideration, but "bills were made up every week and paid more regularly than bard beseems." "Penini's lessons were given and little trowsers creditably frilled and tucked" and yet sixteen thousand lines taken to England for publication. Here is an instance—there are many—to disprove that generally accepted idea that genius must be irresponsible, unmoral and averse to the sphere of common duty. By the very virtue of their high calling they cannot be so ignoble.

The crown of happiness had come with the birth of their son, and the pure delight of motherhood as expressed by Pompilia is the interpretation of Mrs. Browning's own joy. She once wrote: "Robert and I have taken up our parental duties with a perfect passion."

Our pilgrim feet took us, when in Rome, to the Church of Lorenzo-in-Lucina, near the Corso, in which the much-loved Pompilia was baptized and married to Count Guido, and where lay "poor old Pietro," "kind, unwise Violante," and Pompilia after death. A full-length picture of Christ by Guido Reni hangs over the altar, and the lions still guard the doorway. Opposite Treve fountain, Castellani plies his imitative craft, surrounded by a rare collection of art treasures. "These are my jewels," he said with a smile, and when asked if he would give them to

Rome some day, "Oh, I don't know—after me the deluge," quickly came the classic reply. He knew Browning had mentioned his name in a book, but why, he did not comprehend.

Harriet Hosmer told the writer it was in Rome, about six years after the marriage, that she modeled the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Browning. In this rare piece of marble we see his hand, strong, beautiful, holding the other—so frail and delicate—tenderly, as he ever held her in his life, enveloping her with that supreme, personal love which, like God's, makes the receivers kneelers.*

In Florence, at Casa Guidi, in the opal-dawn of a late June day, Elizabeth Barrett Browning closed her eyes on this earth-side of death, whispering "Beautiful," while a strong man was left desolate, crying, "I want her, I want her." At Venice, in Rezzonico Palace, twenty-eight years later, in the deepening twilight of an early December day, Robert Browning closed his eyes on this earth-side of death, kissing the little ring She wore, and whispering:

"O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!"

Pauline Leavens

Whittier Hall, New York,

December, 1910

* A bronze copy of these hands is in the rooms of the Chicago Woman's Club, in the Fine Arts Building, on Michigan Avenue.

THE BROWNINGS' FRIENDS

THE BROWNING'S' FRIENDS

THINKING it might be an item of interest to note the names of the literati, artists and statesmen with whom Mr. and Mrs. Browning walked and talked we have appended this list.

Hans Christian Andersen	Edmund Gosse.
Matthew Arnold.	Frederick Harrison.
Sir Edward Burne-Jones.	Benjamin Robert Haydon
Thomas Carlyle.	Nathaniel Hawthorne.
Jane Carlyle.	Thomas Hood.
Hugh Arthur Clough.	Harriet Hosmer.
Moncure D. Conway.	Leigh Hunt.
Samuel Taylor Coleridge.	William Holman Hunt.
Hiram Corson.	Mary Howitt.
Charlotte Cushman.	Anna Jameson.
Charles Dickens.	Fanny Kemble.
Edward Dowden.	John Kenyon.
George Elliott.	Charles Kingsley.
Cannon Farrar.	Alphonse de Lamartine.
Helen Faucit.	Walter Savage Landor.
Kate Field.	Sir Frederick Leighton.
Frederick Jas. Furnivall.	Charles Lever.
William Ewart Gladstone	Henry Lewes.
Giuseppe Garibaldi.	John Gibson Lockhart.

James Russell Lowell.	Bryan Waller Procter
Edw'd Rob't Bulwer Lyt- ton (Owen Meredith).	(Barry Cornwall).
Edward George Earle Lytton.	Christina Rossetti.
	Dante Gabriel Rossetti.
	William Michael Rossetti
Sir John Millais.	John Ruskin.
Harriet Martineau.	George Sand.
James Martineau.	William Wetmore Story.
Giuseppe Mazzini.	Harriet Beecher Stowe.
Wm. Charles Macready.	Charles Sumner.
George Meredith.	Algernon Charles
Mary Russell Mitford.	Swinburne.
William Morris.	Arthur Symons.
Dinah Maria Mulock (Mrs. Craik).	Bayard Taylor.
	Serjeant Talfourd.
Alfred De Musset.	Sir Alfred Tennyson.
Mrs. Sutherland Orr.	Frederick Tennyson.
Margaret Fuller Ossoli.	William Makepeace
Theodore Parker.	Thackeray.
Coventry Patmore.	William Wordsworth.
Hiram Powers.	George Frederick Watts.
Adelaide Procter.	

APPRECIATIONS

APPRECIATIONS

THESE Appreciations from widely different sources, periods, and climes, are especially interesting at this time—the approaching Centenary.

BROWNING

How blind the toil that burrows like the mole
In winding graveyard pathways, underground,
For Browning's lineage! What if men have found
Poor footmen or rich merchants on the roll
Of his forbears? Did they beget his soul?
Nay, for he came of ancestry renowned
Through all the world,—the poets laurel-crowned
With wreaths from which the autumn takes no toll.

The blazons on his poet-shield are these:
The crimson sign of Shelley's heart on fire,
The staff and script of Chaucer's pilgrimage,
The golden globe of Shakespeare's human stage,
The rose of Dante's deep divine desire,
The tragic mask of wise Euripides.

Henry Van Dyke

BROWNING AT ASOLO

This is the loggia Browning loved,
High on the flank of the friendly town;
These are the hills that his keen eye roved,
The green like a cataract leaping down
To the plain that his pen gave new renown.

There to the West what a range of blue!—
The very background Titian drew
To his peerless Loves! O tranquil scene!
Who than thy poet fondlier knew
The peaks and the shore and the lore between?

See! yonder's his Venice,—the valiant Spire,
Highest one of the perfect three,
Guarding the others; the Palace choir,
The Temple flashing with opal fire,—
Bubble and foam of the sunlit sea.

Yesterday he was part of it all,—
Sat here, discerning cloud from snow
In the flush of the Alpine afterglow,
Or mused on the vineyard whose wine-stirred row
Meets in a leafy bacchanal.

Listen a moment—how oft did he!—
To the bells from Fontalto's distant tower,
Leading the evening in . . . ah, me!
Here breathes the whole soul of Italy,
As one rose breathes with the breath of the bower.

Sighs were meant for an hour like this
When joy is keen as a thrust of pain.
Do you wonder the poet's heart should miss
This touch of rapture in Nature's kiss,
And dream of Asolo over again?

"Part of it yesterday!" we moan?
Nay, he is part of it now, no fear.
What most we love, we are that alone.
His body lies under the minster stone,
But the love of the warm heart lingers here.
Robert Underwood Johnson

Browning was a man of the world in the noble sense,—that sense in which the saints of the future are to be heart and soul one with their fellows. He saw clearly that this present is not to be put by for any future; that there is no future save in the present.

Other poets have chosen their paths through the vast growths of life and by virtue of some principle of selection and exclusion made a way for themselves. But Browning surrendered nothing; he would take life as a whole or he would reject it. He refused to be consoled by ignoring certain classes of facts or to be satisfied with fragments pieced together after some design of his own. He must have a vision of all the facts: and giving each its weight and place, he must make his peace with them, or else chaos and death are

the only certainties. It is only the great souls that thus wrestle the whole night through and will not rest until God has revealed, not indeed His own name, but the name by which they shall henceforth know that to them the Universe is no longer voiceless and godless.

Hamilton Wright Mabie

Unless I very greatly mistake, judging from these two works ("Sordello" and "Pippa Passes"), you seem to possess a rare spiritual gift, poetical, pictorial, intellectual, by whatever name we may prefer calling it; to unfold which into articulate clearness is naturally the problem of problems for you. This noble endowment, it seems to me farther, you are *not* at present on the best way for unfolding; and if the world had loudly called itself content with these two poems, my surmise is, the world could have rendered you no fataler disservice than that same! Believe me, I speak with sincerity; and if I had not loved you well, I would not have spoken at all. If your own choice happened to point that way, I for one should hail it as a good omen that your next work were written in prose!

Carlyle

I would rather have written the "Blot in the 'Scutcheon'" than any other piece of modern times. There is no other man living who could produce such a work.

Charles Dickens

To be a poet is to have a soul so quick to discern that no shade of quality escapes it, and so quick to feel that discernment is but a hand playing with finely ordered variety on the chord of emotion, a soul in which knowledge passes instantaneously into feeling, and feeling flashes back as a new organ of knowledge.

George Eliot

It is some time since we read a work of more unequivocal power than "Paracelsus." We conclude that its author is a young man, as we do not recollect his having published before. If so, we may safely predict for him a brilliant career . . . if he continues true to the promise of his genius. He possesses all the elements of a fine poet.

John Forster

Then I became very much addicted to Browning, and used to read him night and day. I have never myself quite understood what people meant, and still sometimes seem to mean, by the obscurity and "difficulty" of "Sordello." It is distinctly breathless, and it is unduly affected, but if anybody has got a brain at all that brain ought not to be very much exercised in following the fortunes of Sordello and Taurello, Alberic, Adelaide, and the rest. . . .

The "Ring and the Book" is so tyrannously long without any action; so mercilessly voluble without jus-

tification for the volubility; it has such a false air of wisdom and philosophy . . . I remember thinking of Porphyria's love, and wishing that someone had applied that person's drastic procedure to the poet on his own principles. George Saintsbury

No one has made men think more; no one has penetrated further into the mystery of human destiny, into this conflict of the soul with its Divine spark and its infinite flight and of the inexorable laws necessity forges for us. —*The Temps*

Mr. Browning's great merit will have been to have given his name to the woman he married. This respectable old gentleman, in spite of his nobleness of intention, has contributed above all to make English girls love two things which are least fitted for them: metaphysics and Florence, where they all dream of living in tête-à-tête with Botticelli. —*Figaro*

Among Browning's readers gratitude exceeds admiration. To convene a meeting of his creditors would be difficult, for he was little indebted to any, but a multitude of his debtors confess obligations greater than they can estimate. The needy soul is Browning's best interpreter, as the hungry man best comprehends and relishes food. People who have neither suffered keenly nor felt deeply, nor questioned earnestly—

whose inner life is pale, dull, inert, vapid, without aspiration, craving, perplexity, or intensity—are disqualified from comprehending and appreciating him.

William V. Kelley

Never for a moment did Browning give up his allegiance to Christ. The poem "Saul," one of the noblest, if not the noblest, of all his poems, is the one most intensely religious. In no other poem is the claim of Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life of the world more profoundly or more beautifully asserted. Its climax "To see the Christ stand," is for Browning the highest word of poetry, of religion, and of life. Few, if any, poems in the language touch such depths of the religious life or induce within us the conviction that the incarnation of Christ, besides being the central fact of time, is the central fact of eternity as well.

John Angus MacVannel

Browning's best work ranks among the great masterpieces of literature because, like them, it is an inexhaustible well-spring of inspiration rewarding the reader with deeper perception of its truth and fresh appreciation of its beauty with each new reading. The supreme productions in literature are those that reveal their meaning more and more the oftener we return to them, and in this class, together with the masterpieces of Homer, Dante, Goethe and Shakspeare, must be

placed those poems of Browning in which he sets forth his essential message;—the doctrine that no achievement is final, that each new attainment is but the vantage-ground from which we climb to some higher expression of the spirit; the conviction that the possibilities for moral and spiritual progress are literally infinite to an eternal soul in its growth toward that image of the divine in which we were potentially made. Nor can we pay our poet any higher tribute than to say that he practiced what he preached, that his own life was his greatest work of art, that in his own progressive unfolding he gave the world a living interpretation of his message.

Alfred W. Martin

The true function of the dramatist is to create men and women who think, speak and act not as we would have them, but as they must, and always with the accent of their individual life. When the creation is a personality that conquers us by its intrinsic grace and charm, so that we feel that we would rather far be such an one in any misery or distress than to forego such excellence, then literature and ethics have met, righteousness and art have kissed each other. So have they done in "Luria."

John W. Chadwick

Browning makes subtleties his perpetual pasture.

Henry James

We who have learned to drink large inspirations from his words are especially glad to know that he was not himself false to them in his life; that the man is even greater than the poet; and that in the unseen glory which he greeted with a cheer, we may expect to see him robed in eternal light, and dowered with immortal song.

James Mudge

Browning! Since Chaucer was alive and hale,
No man has walked along our road with step
So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue
So varied in discourse.

Walter Savage Landor

Everything Browningish is found here—the legal jauntiness, the knitted argumentation, the cunning prying into detail, the suppressed tenderness, the humanity, the salt intellectual humor. . . . Whatever else may be said of Mr. Browning and his work by way of criticism, it will be admitted on all hands that *nowhere in literature can be found a man and a work more fascinating in their way*. As for the man, he was crowned long ago, and we are not one of those who grumble because one king has a better seat than another, an easier cushion, a finer light in the great temple. A king is a king and each will choose his place.

Robert Buchanan

He is the intellectual phenomenon of the last half century, even if he is not the poetical aloe of modern English literature. His like we have never seen before. . . . In all true poetry the form of the thought is part of the thought, and never was this absolute law of literary æsthetics more flagrantly illustrated than in the poetry of Robert Browning. To say that Browning is the greatest dramatic poet since Shakespeare is to say that he is the greatest poet, most excellent in what is the highest form of imaginative composition, because it is the most creative.

Richard Grant White

Browning is sometimes accused of having no form, but I find myself obliged to deny this premise. Browning not only has form, but is even multiform; not as changing with contradictory colors as might a chameleon, but as protean, like all life, and the more abundant the life the more multiform the expression. He seems akin to that centre of vitality which forgets that it is taking form, and is only conscious that it is.

Thomas R. Slicer

Robert Browning is the poet who makes the supreme appeal to the spiritualized intellect. His philosophy reveals life in its wholeness, its failures being merely the experimental process by means of which man arrives at success. While Browning was not, I

believe, a student of Hegel, his greater poems are yet absolutely permeated with the vital idealism of the Hegelian philosophy.

Lilian Whiting

Browning's whole theory of poetry is summed up in two lines in his first poem, *Pauline*:

"And then thou saidst a perfect bard is one
Who chronicled the stages of all life."

This definition says nothing about Art, Beauty or Rhythm; it declares the Poet primarily to be a Reporter of Life—and the greater variety of life he portrays the greater is his poetry. For this reason, Browning declared Shakespeare to be the greatest of all poets, because he chronicled more stages of life than anyone else. This theory Browning elaborated in *The Glove*, *Transcendentalism*, *How It Strikes a Contemporary*, and the last part of *The Ring and The Book*.

Wm. Lyon Phelps

Browning uncovered his head in returning the salutation of a Priest, and touched his hat to the meanest peasant, who, after the manner of the country, lifted his own to greet the passing stranger. "I always salute the Church," he said. "I respect it."

Katherine de Kay Bronson

The greatest portrait Browning has given us is without doubt that of his wife. There are grand portraits of women that stand out, in my mind, above all others, namely, the portrait of Antigone, the one matchless woman of Greek poetry; the angel wife of Robert Browning; and the Beatrice of Dante.

Dante expressed his wish to write of Beatrice as never man had written of women before; and I think the best critics of the day concede that Robert Browning is the only poet since Dante that has ever reached his altitude.

Mary E. Burt

Yes, as I think it over, "The Ring and the Book" appears to me one of the great pen poems whose splendor can never suffer lasting eclipse, however it may have presently fallen into abeyance. It's such a great story and unfolded with such a magnificent breadth and noble fulness that one who blames it lightly blames himself heavily.

William Dean Howells

The principal aspiration of our age is a passionate longing for Truth, combined with a purity of intention, and a reverence of method in truth-seeking, such as has never been equaled in any age. It is an age of science, but also an age of faith in its sublimest and noblest aspect; an age of destruction if you will, but amidst the ruins of the temples of the past, may already be discovered the rising walls of a new temple, dedi-

cated to a truly Spiritual Religion; an age of intense humanism; an age which has literally taken some of the sting of death, and some of the terrors from the grave, in such an age, what do we most need? A purer faith, a worthier philosophy, a higher standard of rectitude, deeper springs of conduct, more reality, less sham, and above all, a profounder confidence in God and our own truest selves.

Among Humanity's greatest helpers in achieving such aims, must always stand the name of Robert Browning.

J. Herman Randall

The well known Chicagoan, James Charlton, general passenger agent for the Chicago and Alton Railroad, has the distinction of giving to the American public Browning's poems in a series of Railway Guides commencing in December, 1872, and closing in October, 1874. Mr. Charlton was sincerely desirous of giving his favorite poet such an audience as never another poet had.

This unique method of treating the public to poetry pleased Browning and a complete set was sent him by his request and it is now in the archives of the British Museum.

One of the greatest pleasures I have experienced in years of teaching has been the deep and abiding hold that the poetry of Robert Browning has taken upon

my students. Year after year, echoes come from the Browning class bearing messages of thankfulness and love to the poet whose words and ideals have been so assimilated as to have a vital power in the active lives of these students. I say unhesitatingly that I believe no English poet, except Shakespeare, gives such genuine satisfaction as a reward for the time expended as Browning, and what is more, I believe that any intelligent, conscientious teacher with a fair amount of literary appreciation—and surely no other ought to teach literature—can arouse greater and more lasting enthusiasm among college students for Browning than for any other poet,—and I have no sympathy with the Browning fad—indeed, Browning is not for the “fad-dist”—he is for the man whose soul hungers for the richest bounties poetry possesses.

A. J. Armstrong

An excellent solemn chiming, the passage from Dante makes with your “Sordello,” and the “Sordello” deserves the labour which it needs, to make it appear the great work it is. I think that the principle of association is too subtly in movement throughout it—so that while you are going straight forward you go at the same time round and round, until the progress involved in the motion is lost sight of by the lookers on.

Elizabeth Barrett

Browning is almost alone in the peculiar height and delicacy of his interpretation of womanhood, and Pompilia the crowning illustration of this.

She is the heroic type of womanhood rising in perfect response to every height of experience, discerning through utter sincerity and transparency of soul the truth in the highest relations of human life.

There is infinite delicacy and yet depth in Browning's reading of the secrets of the woman's soul, the glory and beauty of her motherhood. Pompilia is even nearer than Caponsacchi to The Truth. In each the supreme hunger to serve the good of the other, infinitely and forever, rather than to be made happy by or be loved and satisfied.

Edward Howard Griggs

Robert Browning's view of life, love, and immortality are three points by which to swing the broken arc of earth and the perfect round of heaven. Life—a riot of gladness, a man's sharing in the angel's highest privilege of doing God's will: the faith that everything means good and means it intensely.

Love—the Aladdin's lamp of the soul: Life's Summum Bonum: the pulsing heart flood against which no barrier can or ought to stand.

Immortality—the necessary working hypothesis of life: the one assumption that can fit good and evil, anguish and ecstasy: ignorance and omniscience: God

and man into one exquisitely harmonious scheme at the end of which stands a human face, the Christ's human hand to receive men home.

William Perry Eveland

Humanity is made Sordello's companion-player on the stage of his life, so that the poem rightly conceived is not so metaphysical as is commonly supposed, but is virtually an experiment in the evolution of a poet and potential statesman by contact with the social world and popular needs lying outside of his individual nature. If in "Paracelsus," Browning's poem of Mind and Heart, the scheme of evolution unfolded was concerned with human origins, in the "Sordello," his poem of Will, the scheme was pushed a step farther, and dealt with social processes.

Charlotte Porter

I like very many and very different kinds of books, and do not for a moment attempt anything so preposterous as a continual comparison between books which may appeal to totally different needs, totally different sets of emotions. For instance, one correspondent pointed out to me that Tennyson was "trivial" compared to Browning, and another complained that I had omitted Walt Whitman; another asked why I put Longfellow "on a level" with Tennyson. I believe I did take Walt Whitman on one hunt, and I like Browning, Tennyson and Longfellow, all of them,

without thinking it necessary to compare them. It is largely a matter of personal taste. . . .

Nor does my liking for Tennyson prevent my caring greatly for "Childe Roland," "Love Among the Ruins," "Proteus" and nearly all the poems that I can understand, and some that I can merely guess at, in Browning. I do not feel the slightest need of trying to apply a common measuring-rule to these three poets, any more than I find it necessary to compare Keats with Shelley, or Shelley with Poe. I enjoy them all.

Theodore Roosevelt

The British Public, who unceasingly bragged of the Shakespeare of whom it knew little, and the Spencer and Dryden and the rest, of whom it knew practically nothing, ridiculed the idea that Browning could be of the regal caste of poets because he spoke a language that was not of the sort it was accustomed to. Browning mixed no water with his ink, as Goethe said our modern poets do; there was often little music in his words, and the sense was at times rather hard to grasp; and so our strong, robust, gloriously sane poet "came to his own and his own received him not." He spoke vigorous, pregnant words, warm from his great, loving heart, and "poured for us wine" to brace our souls in the degenerate days when men were giving up God for the unknowable, and their faith in Christianity for belief in "something not ourselves which

makes for righteousness"; he taught us a pure religion, reasonable and manly, robust and in harmony with the science of the age, and few would listen and fewer still would heed. Yet the age had such need of him!

Edward Berdoe

The character of Festus rivals that of Paracelsus in its strength and individuality. He embodies in a marvelous degree the ideal friend of humanity. Paracelsus would serve man and God, but Festus would serve God by loving man; he holds the praise of God to be:

"The natural end and service of a man

And holds such praise is best attained when man
Attains the general welfare of his kind."

Michal, the wife of Festus, is Browning's first attempt to portray a woman. She is little more than a vision, hardly individualized, and looks out among the stronger personalities of the poem like the shadowy face of an angel in some old painting. She is "Sweet Michal."

Mrs. Fanny Holy

The general belief expressed in the statement that he did not care about form is simply the most ridiculous criticism that could be conceived. It would be far nearer the truth to say that he cared more for form than any other English poet who ever lived. He

was always moulding and modeling and inventing new forms. Among all his two hundred or three hundred poems, it would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that there are half as many different meters as there are different poems.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton

Browning is cosmopolitan because he is following the human spirit in its countless avatars, its Protean changes, in every age and nation. He is interested in the human spirit whenever it lifts itself above the indistinguishable mass of existence. Browning is not interested in humanity as the philanthropist or democrat, but as the artist and student of personality. He prefers to present extreme examples of human possibilities, to have new and peculiar poetic material. (Cf. Tennyson.) The vindictive Spanish monk jostles the modern skeptical bishop; Caliban's theology is as interesting as the aspirations of Andrea del Sarto. He sits now at the *Mermaid* with Shakspeare and the rest, and now the spiritualist seance with Sludge, the Medium. In this ceaseless interest in personality, Browning has the insatiable curiosity that marked the Renaissance and that marks our times. The poet of the Renaissance is Shakspeare; the poet of our own era is Browning.

Frederick H. Sykes

The first woman to notice in this long gallery of portraits is Balaustion, the largest, healthiest, happiest woman of the group. A creature of superb physique, a profound philosopher (except in love affairs,—neither men nor women are philosophers there), good natured but earnest, witty but serious. She is perfectly natural, a far closer portrait of a real American girl than our own literature affords. She is a true girl in every respect, if Browning did paint his own attributes into her character. When she is introduced to us she is sitting with four other girls; they are all seated easily together on the bank of a stream, their lips pursed up like crumpled rose leaves; they are listening to the story of her adventure. Mary E. Burt

Poets have described the beauties, the sublimities of nature; Browning was the first poet, so far as I know, who made a starved landscape poetical; by which I mean, such a landscape appeal to the spiritual nature of the reader. It is all important in the higher poetry that the concrete become a direct spiritual medium to the student, independently of any intellectual interpretation.

The true function of poetry should be to induce an exercise of the spiritual nature. There are plenty of other things in this matter-of-fact world to induce an exercise of the bumptious intellect.

Hiram Corson

Instead of looking to perfection as an inheritance of earth such as is pictured by Shelley in symbols, cosmic and spiritual, in the closing act of his "Prometheus Unbound," Browning's ideal grew to be eternal æons of struggle and growth, relative evil always holding its appointed place as a spur toward further effort.

Helen A. Clark

BROWNING'S POINT OF VIEW

BROWNING'S POINT OF VIEW

OPINIONS are volatile, convictions are dynamic. Browning consistently gave his opinion and unflinchingly expressed his convictions on art, music, science, evolution, immortality, and men and things generally. And it is a distinct pleasure to add these excerpts given over his own signature.

WHY I AM A LIBERAL

"Why?" Because all I haply can and do,
All that I am, now, all I hope to be,—
Whence comes it save from fortune setting free
Body and soul the purpose to pursue,
God traced for both? If fetters, not a few,
Of prejudice, convention, fall from me,
These shall I bid men—each in his degree
Also God-guided—bear, and gayly too?

But little do or can the best of us:

That little is achieved through Liberty.
Who, then, dares hold, emancipated thus,
His fellow shall continue bound? Not I,
Who live, love, labor freely, nor discuss
A brother's right to freedom. That is "Why."

A lady asked Browning to write an inscription for her gift to Gladstone on the fiftieth anniversary of his marriage. Browning answered: "Surely your kindness, even your sympathy, will be extended to me when I say with sorrow indeed that I am unable now conscientiously to do what, but a few years ago I would have, at least, attempted with such pleasure and pride as might almost promise success. I have received much kindness from that extraordinary personage, and what my admiration for his transcendent abilities was and ever will be, there is no need to speak of: but I am forced to altogether deplore his present attitude with respect to the liberal party, of which I am the humblest unit, am still a member, and as such, grieved to the heart by every fresh utterance of his which comes to my knowledge. Were I in position to explain publicly how much the personal feeling is independent of the political aversion, all would be easy, but I am a mere man of Letters, and by the simple inscription, which would truly testify to what is endearing unalterable in my esteem, I should lead people—as well those who know me as those who do not—to believe my approbation extended far beyond the bounds which unfortunately circumscribe it now. All this—even more—was on my mind as I sat last evening at the same table with the brilliantly-gifted man whom once—but that 'once' is too sad to remember."

Right Hon. John Morley

—*Life of Gladstone*

Another testimony to the vitality of Browning study at the present time reaches us in the shape of a daintily printed leaflet, issued by the San Francisco Browning Society, a souvenir of one of its mornings spent in consideration of "Bishop Blougram's Apology." The leaflet shows the thoroughness of a group of enthusiastic students. It contains a brief account of the poems, including an interesting reference to its real hero, Cardinal Wiseman, and eight or ten pages of notes, some of which are admirably suggestive. The fragment of a letter of Browning's which is included is worth quoting:

"The most curious notice I ever had was from Cardinal Wiseman, on Blougram—*i.e.*, himself. It was in 'The Rambler,' a Catholic journal of those days, and certified to be his by Father Prout, who said nobody else would have dared put it in. The review praises the poem for its 'fertility of illustration and felicity of argument,' and says that, 'though utterly mistaken in the very groundwork of religion, though starting from the most unworthy notions of the work of a Catholic bishop, and defending a self-indulgence, every honest man must feel to be disgraceful, [it] is yet, in its way, triumphant.'"

And what easy work these novelists have of it! A dramatic poet has to make you love or admire his men and women—they must *do* and *say* all that you are

to see and hear—really do it in your face, say it in your ears and it is wholly for *you* in *your* power, to name, characterize, and so praise or blame *what* is so said and done, so if you don't perceive of yourself there is no standing by for the Author and telling you. But with these novelists—a scrape of the pen—out-blurting of a phrase and the miracle is achieved pray what think you of Bulwer's beginning a character by informing that same was endowed with *perfect* genius—genius! —*Letters, Vol. I*

By this time you have got my little book ("Hohenstiel") and seen for yourself whether I make the best or the worst of the case. I think, in the main, he meant to do what I say, and, but for weakness—grown more apparent in his last years than formerly—would have done what I say he did not. I thought badly of him at the beginning of his career, *et pour cause*: better afterward, on the strength of the promises he made, and gave indications of intending to redeem. I think him very weak in the last miserable year. At his worst I prefer him to Thiers's best. I am told my little thing is succeeding—sold 1,400 in the first five days, and before any notice appeared. I remember that the year I made the little rough sketch in Rome, 1860, my account for the last six months with Chapman was—*nil*, not one copy disposed of. . . . "Balustion"—the second edition is in the press, I think

I told you. Two thousand five hundred in five months is a good sale for the likes of me.

Mrs. Sutherland Orr

—*Life and Letters*

Edmund Gosse asked Mr. Browning what poems of moderate length represented him fairly, and the answer was: "If I knew what moderation exactly meant the choice would be easier. Let me say at a venture—lyrical, "Saul," or "Abt Vogler;" narrative, "A Forgiveness;" dramatic, "Caliban Upon Setebos;" idyllic (in a Greek sense), "Clive." Which means that being restricted to four dips in the lucky-bag I should not object to be judged by these samples so far as they go, for there is somewhat beyond still."

My dear young friends, some people are good enough to say that my writings are sometimes unintelligible; but I hope to make myself intelligible to you now when I say how affected and impressed I am by this noble, this magnificent welcome which you have given one so unworthy as myself. You dear young men, how I love you all!

Llangollen, Sept., 1886

Time has kindly co-operated with my disinclination to write the poetry and the criticism besides. The readers I am at last privileged to expect, meet me fully half-way; and if, from the fitting standpoint, they must still "censure me in their wisdom" they have previously "awakened their senses that they may the better judge." Nor do I apprehend any more charges of being willfully obscure, unconscientiously careless, or perversely harsh.

Having hitherto done my utmost in the art to which my life is a devotion, I cannot engage to increase the effort; but I conceive that there may be helpful light, as well as reassuring warmth, in the attention and sympathy I gratefully acknowledge.

London, May 14, 1872

I wrote "Sordello" twenty-five years ago for only a few, counting even in these on somewhat more care about its subject than they really had. My own faults of expression were many; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it, what avails the faultlessness of either? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might,—instead of what the few must,—like: but after all, I imagined another thing at first, and therefore leave it as I find it.

The historical decoration was purposely of no more

importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul; little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so—you, with many known and unknown to me, think so,—others may one day think so.

Browning seemed as full of dramatic interest in reading "In a Balcony" as if he had just written it for our benefit.

One who sat near him said that it was a natural sequence that the step of the guard should be heard coming to take Norbert to his doom, as, with a nature like the queen's, who had known only one hour of joy in her sterile life, vengeance swift and terrible would follow on the sudden destruction of her happiness.

"Now, I don't quite think that," answered Browning, as if he were following out the play as a spectator. "The queen has a large and passionate temperament, which had only once been touched and brought into intense life.

"She would have died by a knife in her heart. The guard would have come to carry away her dead body.

"But I imagine that most people interpret it as I do," was the reply.

"Then," said Browning, with quick interest, don't you think it would be well to put it in the stage directions, and have it seem that they were carrying her across the back of the stage?"

Katherine de Kay Bronson

The subjective poet is impelled to embody the thing he perceives, and not so much with the reference to many below as to the One above him, the supreme Intelligence which apprehends all things in their absolute truth,—an ultimate view ever aspired to, if but partially attained, by the poet's own soul. Not what man sees but what God sees,—the *Ideas* of Plato, seeds of creation lying burning on the Divine Hand,—it is toward these that he struggles. Not with the combination of humanity in action, but with the primal elements of humanity, he has to do; and he digs where he stands,—preferring to seek them in his own soul as the nearest reflex of that absolute Mind.

—*Essay on Shelley*

For it is with this world, as starting point and basis alike that we shall always have to concern ourselves: the world is not to be learned and thrown aside, but reverted to and relearned. The spiritual comprehension may be infinitely subtilized, but the raw material it operates upon must remain. There may be no end of the poets who communicate to us what they feel in an object with reference to their own individuality; what it was before they saw it in reference to the aggregate human mind will be as desirable to know as ever.

—*Essay on Shelley*

Greatness in a work suggests an adequate instrumentality; and none of the lower incitements, however they may avail to initiate or even affect many considerable displays of powers, simulating to nobler inspiration, to which they are mistakenly referred, have been found able under the ordinary conditions of humanity, to task themselves to the end of so exacting a performance as a poet's complete work.

—*Essay on Shelley*

Gradually he (Shelley) was learning that the best way of removing abuses is to stand fast by truth. Truth is one, as they are manifold; and innumerable negative effects are produced by the upholding of one positive principle.

—*Essay on Shelley*

I concede, however, in respect to the subject of our study as well as some few other illustrious examples, that the unmistakable quality of the verse would be evidence enough, under usual circumstances, not only of the kind and degree of the intellectual but of the moral constitution of Shelley; the whole personality of the poet shining forward from the poems, without much need of going further to seek it.

—*Essay on Shelley*

But Art,—wherein man nowise speaks to men,
Only to mankind,—Art may tell a truth
Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought,
Nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word.
So may you paint your picture, twice show truth
Beyond mere imagery on the wall,—
So, note by note, bring music from your mind,
Deeper than ever e'en Beethoven dived,—
So write a book shall mean beyond the facts,
Suffice the eye and save the soul beside.

—*Part XII, The Ring and the Book*

Shakespeare!—to such name's sounding, what succeeds

Fitly as silence? Falter forth the spell,—
Act follows word, the speaker knows full well,
Nor tampers with its magic more than needs.
Two names there are: That which the Hebrew reads
With his soul only: if from lips it fell,
Echo, back thundered by earth, heaven and hell,
Would own, "Thou didst create us!" Naught impedes.
We voice the other name, man's most of might,
Awesomely, lovingly: let awe and love
Mutely await their working, leave to sight
All of the issue as—below—above—
Shakespeare's creation rises: one remove,
Though dread—this finite from that infinite.

The preliminary step to following Christ, is the leaving the dead to bury their dead—not clamoring on His doctrine for an especial solution of difficulties which are referable to the general problem of the universe.

—*Essay on Shelley*

All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of
one bee:

All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the heart
of one gem:

In the core of one pearl all the shade and the shine of
the sea:

Breath and bloom, shade and shine,—wonder,
wealth, and—how far above them—

Truth, that's brighter than gem,

Trust, that's purer than pearl,—

Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe—all were
for me

In the kiss of one girl.

"The Poet's age is sad: for why?

In youth, the natural world could show
No common object but his eye
At once involved with alien glow—
His own soul's iris-bow.

"And now a flower is just a flower:

Man, bird, beast are but beast, bird, man—
Simply themselves, uncinct by dower
Of dyes which, when life's day began,
Round each in glory ran."

Friend, did you need an optic glass,
Which were your choice? A lens to drape
In ruby, emerald, chrysopras,
Each object—or reveal its shape
Clear outlined, past escape.

The naked very thing?—so clear
That, when you had the chance to gaze,
You found its inmost self appear
Through outer seeming—truth ablaze,
Not falsehood's fancy-haze?

How many a year, my Asolo,
Since—one step just from sea to land—
I found you, loved yet feared you so—
For natural objects seemed to stand
Palpably fire-clothed! No—

No mastery of mine o'er these!

Terror with beauty, like the Bush
Burning but unconsumed. Bend knees,
Drop eyes to earthward! Language? Tush!
Silence 't is awe decrees.

And now? The lambent flame is—where?

Lost from the naked world: earth, sky,
Hill, vale, tree, flower,—Italia's rare
O'er-running beauty crowds the eye—
But flame? The Bush is bare.

Hill, vale, tree, flower—they stand distinct,
Nature to know and name. What then?
A Voice spoke thence which straight unlinked
Fancy from fact: see, all's in ken:
Has once my eyelid winked?

No, for the purged ear apprehends
Earth's import, not the eye late dazed:
The Voice said "Call my works thy friends!
At Nature dost thou shrink amazed?
God is it who transcends."

—*Prologue**

Asolo, Sept. 6, 1889

*TO MRS. ARTHUR BRONSON

To whom but you, dear Friend, should I dedicate verses—some few written, all of them supervised, in the comfort of your presence, and with yet another experience of the gracious hospitality now bestowed on me since so many a year,—adding a charm even to my residences at Venice, and leaving me little regret for the surprise and delight at my visits to Asolo in bygone days? * * *

FOREWORD TO SELECTIONS

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“**A**RT helps us to see: hundreds can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see: to see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion all in one.”

This salient truth was spoken by Ruskin, our great high priest of art, a personal friend and neighbor of Browning, as Carlyle was also. These three were co-workers for the coming on of the kingdom of heaven—and the greatest of these? Browning.

In considering the relative value of the fine arts, we must first take cognizance of the all embracing, exceeding difficult Art of Living, a problem each and all must solve every day because Eternity is here and now. This pulsating, recording Art takes high precedence, Poetry follows, a loving, close second for the obvious reason that it is the incisive, subtle, interpreter of its supreme predecessor, Life; and the study of literature from the earliest to the latest reign has taught us that Poetry is its quintessence, by the virtue of the poet's power to see. Art—holding that it always signifies the struggle towards perfection—is the manifestation of the Infinite thru the medium of the Finite. The Art

of Living is our ideal, expressed in action. This is not catalogued in the school curriculum, Life alone is the teacher. All other arts are ideals embodied in form, and Life is here the teacher also. In so far as we reach toward our ideals thru action, reduce the imperfect form to the near-perfect, dissolve discordant sounds into deep melody, do we lay hold on the Infinite. Poets have the transcendent power to "see clearly," and it is a delight to stand close to a clear-thinking mind, combined with a tender, boundless sympathy, and an unswerving faith in the indissoluble bond between every soul and its Maker. Such a poet is Robert Browning.

It is never just to a dramatist to credit him personally with the opinions or convictions expressed by the children of his brain. Surely young Hamlet's agonizing wail, "Frailty, thy name is woman," can not be Shakespeare's sober dictum, whatever we may think of that incident of "the second-best feather bed."

In the following pages Browning's "fifty men and women" speak for themselves—in their own name, and it would be somewhat difficult to gather an equal number of men and women from the pages of any other author whose lustre would dim the stars in this galaxy.

Here we have the incomparable Balaustion; the ideal Colombe, leaving the dukedom and hastening to Cleves with the heroic Valence; Domizia, rising responsive to the nobility of Luria; elusive Aprile, shrinking Ignotus, politic Ogniben, Cleon, whose culture hides

the hope of immortality; suffering Mildred, the ineffably tender Mertoun, the brave Anæl, despicable Sebald, ready to save himself and leave the woman he has wronged; Jules, gladly breaking his paltry models up that he may attain to greater heights by the new vision.

The necessary limit-line of this book prevents many other "Men and Women" from expressing their views, and also excludes innumerable choice bits of love and lore to be found in the almost inexhaustible storehouse of erudition from which we have gathered these.

SELECTIONS

SELECTIONS

THERE they are, my fifty men and women,
Naming me the fifty poems finished!
Take them, Love, the book and me together:
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

One Word More*

How can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem here.
Just where we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
The grand Perhaps! Bishop Blougram
—*Bishop Blougram's Apology*

Why crown whom Zeus has crowned before?

Balaustion

—*Balaustion's Adventure*

[*Originally appended to the collection of Poems called "Men and Women," the greater portion of which has now been, more correctly, distributed under the other titles of this edition.—R. B.]

So let him wait God's instant men call years:
Meantime hold hard by truth and his great soul,
Do out the duty! Through such souls alone
God stooping shows sufficient of His light
For us i' the dark to rise by. And I rise.

Pompilia

—*The Ring and the Book*

And for the rest,
I cannot tell thy messenger aright
Where to deliver what he bears of thine
To one called Paulus; we have heard his fame
Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—
I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
Hath access to a secret shut from us?
Thou wrongest our Philosophy, O king,
In stooping to inquire of such an one,
As if his answer could impose at all!
He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.
Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves
Who touched on this same isle, preached him and
Christ;
And (as I gathered from a by-stander)
Their doctrine could be held by no sane man.

Cleon

—*Cleon*

I have heard of those who seemed
Resourceless in prosperity,—you thought
Sorrow might slay them when she listed; yet
Did they so gather up their diffused strength
At her first menace, that they bade her strike,
And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to scorn.
Oh! 'tis not so with me!

Mildred

—*A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*

The love of peace, care for the family,
Contentment with what's bad but might be worse—
Good movements these! and good, too, discontent,
So long as that spurs good, which might be best,
Into becoming better, anyhow.

Prince Hohenstiel-Schwanganau (Napoleon III)

—*Prince Hohenstiel-Schwanganau*

I have done with being judged.
I stand here guiltless in thought, word and deed,
To the point that I apprise you—in contempt
For all misapprehending ignorance
Of the human heart, much more the mind of Christ,—
That I assuredly did bow, was blessed
By the revelation of Pompilia.

Caponsacchi

—*The Ring and the Book*

God must be glad one loves His world so much.
I can give news of earth to all the dead
Who ask me:—last year's sunsets, and great stars
That had a right to come first and see ebb
The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—
Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims
That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood,
Impatient of the azure—and that day
In March, a double rainbow, moonlit summer nights—
May's warm, slow, yellow moonlit summer nights—
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!

Luigi

—*Pippa Passes*

The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life:
Try to be Shakespeare!

Bishop Blougram

—*Bishop Blougram's Apology*

I know that the great
For pleasure born, should still be on the watch
To exclude pleasure when a Duty offers:
Even as, the lowly too for Duty born,
May ever snatch a pleasure if in reach:
Both will have plenty of their birthright, Sir!

Valence

—*Colombe's Birthday*

Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true!
And love's the truth of mine. Time prove the rest!

Norbert

—*In a Balcony*

I trust in God—the right shall be the right
And other than the wrong while He endures:
I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
The outward and the inward, nature's good
And God's: so, seeing these men and myself,
Having a right to speak, thus do I speak.

Chiappino

—*A Soul's Tragedy*

I take aught
That teaches me their wrongs with greater pride
Than this your ducal circlet. The Duchess
—*Colombe's Birthday*

God made all the creatures and gave them our love and
our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family
here. David

—*Saul*

The valley-level has its hawks no doubt:
May not the rock-top have its eagles, too?
The Duchess
—*Colombe's Birthday*

You creature with the eyes!

If I could look forever up to them,
As now you let me, I believe, all sin,
All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,
Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth
Whence all that's low comes, and there touch and
stay—

Never to overtake the rest of me,
All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
Drawn by those eyes! What rises is myself,
Not me the shame and suffering; but they sink,
Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so
Above the world!

Phene

—*Pippa Passes*

I am for noble Aureole, God!

I am upon his side, come weal or woe,
His portion shall be mine. He has done well.
I would have sinned, had I been strong enough,
As he has sinned. Reward him or I waive
Reward! If thou canst find no place for him,
He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
His slave forever. There are two of us.

Festus

—*Paracelsus*

And wisely. (He is Anael's brother, pure
As Anael's self.) Go say, I come to her.
Haste! I will follow you.

Oh, not confess
To these, the blinded multitude—confess,
Before at least the fortune of my deed
Half-authorize its means! Only to her
Let me confess my fault, who in my path
Curled up like incense from a Mage-king's tomb
When he would have the wayfarer descend
Through the earth's rift and bear hid treasure forth!
How should child's carelessness prove manhood's
crime

Till now that I, whose lone youth hurried past,
Letting each joy 'scape for the Druses' sake,
At length recover in one Druse all joy?
Were her brow brighter, her eyes richer, still
Would I confess. On the gulf's verge I pause.
How could I slay the Prefect, thus and thus?
Anael, be mine to guard me, not destroy!

Djabal

—*The Return of the Druses*

Moreover, say that certain sin there seem,
The proper process of unsinning sin
Is to begin well-doing somehow else.

Tertium Quid

—*The Ring and the Book*

A pretty woman's worth some pains to see,
Nor is she spoiled, I take it, if a crown
Complete the forehead pale or tresses pure . . .

Guibert

—*Colombe's Birthday*

Djabal, I knew your secret from the first:
Djabal, when first I saw you . . . (by our porch
You leant, and pressed the tinkling veil away,
And one fringe fell behind your neck—I see!)
. . . I knew you were not human, for I said
“This dim secluded house where the sea beats
Is heaven to me—my people's huts are hell
To them; this august form will follow me,
Mix with the waves his voice will,—I have him;
And they, the Prefect! Oh, my happiness
Rounds to the full whether I choose or no!
His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,
His hand grew damp—surely he meant to say
He let me love him: in that moment's bliss
I shall forget my people pine for home—
They pass and they repass with pallid eyes!”
I vowed at once a certain vow; this vow—
Not to embrace you till my tribe was saved.
Embrace me!

Anael

—*The Return of the Druses*

Ay, Anael, Anael,—is that said at last?
 Louder than all, that would be said, I knew!
 What does abjuring mean, confessing mean,
 To the people? Till that woman crossed my path,
 On went I, solely for my people's sake:
 I saw her, and I then first saw myself,
 And slackened pace: "if I should prove indeed
 Hakeem—with Anael by!" Djabal

—*The Return of the Druses*

Trade in the dear Druses?
 Blood and sweat traffic? Spare what yesterday
 We heard enough of! Drove I in the Isle
 A profitable game? Learn wit, my son,
 Which you'll need shortly! Did it never breed
 Suspicion in you, all was not pure profit,
 When I, the insatiate . . . and so forth—was
 bent

On having a partaker in my rule?
 Why did I yield this Nuncio half the gain,
 If not that I might also shift—what on him?
 Half of the peril, Loys! Prefect

—*The Return of the Druses*

Yes, I see now. God is the perfect Poet,
 Who in His person acts His own creations.

Aprile
 —*Paracelsus*

And am I not the Prefect now?
 Is it my fate to be the only one
 Able to win her love, the only one
 Unable to accept her love? The past
 Breaks up beneath my footing: came I here
 This morn as to a slave, to set her free
 And take her thanks, and then spend day by day
 Content beside her in the Isle? What works
 This knowledge in me now? Her eye has broken
 The faint disguise away: for Anael's sake
 I left the Isle, for her espoused the cause
 Of the Druses, all for her I thought, till now,
 To live without!

As I must live! To-day
 Ordains me Knight, forbids me . . . never shall
 Forbid me to profess myself, heart, arm,
 Thy soldier!

Loys

—*The Return of the Druses*

The common problem, yours, mine, everyone's,
 Is—not to fancy what were fair in life
 Provided it could be,—but, finding first
 What may be, then find how to make it fair
 Up to our means: a very different thing!

Bishop Blougram

—*Bishop Blougram's Apology*

Were I elect like you,
I would encircle me with love, and raise
A rampart of my fellows.

Festus
—*Paracelsus*

We shall not meet in this world nor the next,
But where will God be absent? In His face
Is life, but in His shadow healing too;
Let Guido touch the shadow and be healed.

Pompilia
—*The Ring and the Book*

Thou art my single holiday God lends to leaven
What were all earth else with a feel of heaven.

To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk
The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:
But this one day I have leave to go,
And play out my fancy's fullest games;
I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—
That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

Pippa
—*Pippa Passes*

Lied is a rough phrase: say he fell from the truth
 In climbing towards it!—sure less faulty so
 Than had he sat him down and stayed content
 With thy safe orthodoxy, “White all white,
 White everywhere for certain I should see
 Did I but understand how white is black,
 As clearer sense than mine would.” Clearer sense,—
 Whose may that be? mere human eyes I boast,
 And such distinguish colors in the main,
 However any tongue, that’s human too,
 Please to report the matter.

Ferishtah

—*Ferishtah’s Fancies*

What’s midnight doubt before the dayspring’s faith?

Bishop Blougram

—*Bishop Blougram’s Apology*

Sirs: I obeyed. Obedience was too strange—
 This new thing that had been struck into me.
 By the look o’ the lady,—to dare disobey
 The first authoritative word. ’Twas God’s.
 I had been lifted to the level of her,
 Could take such sounds into my sense.

Caponsacchi

—*The Ring and the Book*

Rather tear men out the heart
O' the truth! Sordello
—*Sordello*

. . . 'Tis man's cause!
Fail thou, and thine own fall is least to dread.
Luria
—*Luria*

My business is not to remake myself,
But make the absolute best of what God made.
Bishop Blougram
—*Bishop Blougram's Apology*

The more I thank God, like my grandmother,*
For making me a little lower than
The angels honor-clothed and glory-crowned:
This is the honor,—that no thing I know,
Feel or conceive, but I can make my own
Somehow, by use of hand or head or heart:
This is the glory,—that in all conceived,
Or felt or known, I recognize a mind
Not mine but like mine,—for the double joy,—
Making all things for me and me for Him.

Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau (Napoleon III)
—*Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*

* Empress Josephine

I proclaim

The angel in thee, and reject the sprites
Which ineffectual crowd about his strength,
And mingle with his work and claim a share!
Unconsciously to the augustest end
Thou hast arisen: second not in rank
So much as time, to him who first ordained
That Florence, thou art to destroy, should be.
Yet him a star, too, guided, who broke first
The pride of lonely power, the life apart,
And made the eminences, each to each,
Lean o'er the level world and let it lie
Safe from the thunder henceforth 'neath their tops;
So the few famous men of old combined,
And let the multitude rise underneath,
And reach them and unite—so Florence grew:
Braccio speaks true, it is well worth the price.

Domizia

—*Luria*

First of the first,

Such I pronounce Pompilia, then as now
Perfect in whiteness: . . . Go past me
And get thy praise—and be not far to seek
Presently when I follow if I may!

The Pope

—*The Ring and the Book*

The prize is the process: knowledge means
Ever-renewed assurance by defeat
That victory is somehow still to reach,
But love is victory, the prize itself.

Ferishtah

—*Ferishtah's Fancies*

'Twas a text

Whereon folks preached and praised, the district
through.

"Oh make us happy and you make us good!
It all comes of God giving her a child:
Such graces follow God's best earthly gift."

Tertium Quid

—*The Ring and the Book*

Then

You were wrong, you see; that's well to see though
late:

That's all we may expect of man this side
The grave; his good is—knowing he is bad.
Thus will it be with us when the books ope
And we stand at the bar on judgment day.

Caponsacchi

—*The Ring and the Book*

Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

Rabbi Ben Ezra

—*Rabbi Ben Ezra*

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three parts pain!
Strive and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the
throe!

Rabbi Ben Ezra

—*Rabbi Ben Ezra*

Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and
learn?"

Rabbi Ben Ezra

—*Rabbi Ben Ezra*

There's not the meanest woman in the world,
Not she I least could love in all the world,
Whom, did she love me, had love proved itself,
I dare insult as you insult me now.
Constance, I could say, if it must be said,
"Take back the soul you offer, I keep mine!"
But—"Take the soul still quivering on your hand,
The soul so offered, which I cannot use,
And, please you, give it to some playful friend,
For—what's the trifle he requites me with?"
I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,
That two may mock her heart if it succumb?
No: fearing God and standing 'neath His heaven,
I would not dare insult a woman so,
Were she the meanest woman in the world,
And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

Norbert

—*In a Balcony*

I cannot chain my soul: it will not rest
In its clay prison, this most narrow sphere:
It has strange impulse, tendency, desire
Which nowise I account for nor explain,
But cannot stifle, *being bound to trust*
All feelings equally, to hear all sides.

The Lover

—*Pauline*

But how carve way i' the life that lies before,
If bent on groaning ever for the past? .

Balaustion

—*Balaustion's Adventure*

False I will never—rash I would not be!
This is indeed my birthday—soul and body,
Its hours have done on me the work of years.
You hold the requisition: ponder it!
If I have right, my duty's plain: if he—
Say so, nor ever change a tone of voice!
At night you meet the Prince; meet me at eve!
Till when, farewell! This discomposes you?
Believe in your nature, and its force
Of renovating mine! I take my stand
Only as under me the earth is firm.

The Duchess

—*Colombe's Birthday*

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-grey,
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain;
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No
doubt.

Andrea del Sarto

—*Andrea del Sarto*

Be a god and hold me
With a charm!
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm!

Teach me, only teach, Love!
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought.

The Wife

—*A Woman's Last Word*

So, for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice
That women hate a debt as men a gift.
If I were you, I could obtain this grace—
Could lay the whole I did to love's account,
Nor yet be very false as courtiers go—
Declaring my success was recompense;
It would be so, in fact: what were it else?
And then, once loose her generosity,—
Oh, how I see it!—then, were I but you,
To turn it, let it seem to move itself,
And make it offer what I really take,
Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand,
Her value as the next thing to the Queen's—
Since none love Queens directly, none dare that,
And a thing's shadow or a name's mere echo
Suffices those who miss the name and thing!

Constance

—*In a Balcony*

How soon a smile of God can change the world!
How we are made for happiness—how work
Grows play, adversity a winning fight!
True, I have lost so many years: what then?
Many remain: God has been very good.
You, stay here! 'Tis as different from dreams,
From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss,
As these stone statues from the flesh and blood.
The comfort thou hast caused mankind, God's moon!

The Queen
—*In a Balcony*

For the main criminal I have no hope
Except in such a suddenness of fate.
I stood at Naples once, a night so dark
I could have scarce conjectured there was earth
Anywhere, sky or sea or world at all:
But the night's black was burst through by a blaze—
Thunder struck blow on blow, earth groaned and bore,
Through her whole length of mountain visible:
There lay the city thick and plain with spires,
And like a ghost disshrouded, white the sea.
So may the truth be flashed out by one blow,
And Guido see, one instant, and be saved.
Else I avert my face, nor follow him
Into that sad obscure sequestered state
Where God unmakes but to remake the soul

He else made first in vain; which must not be.
Enough, for I may die this very night,
And how should I dare die, this man let live?

The Pope

—*The Ring and the Book*

Knowledge and power have rights.
But ignorance and weakness have rights too.
There needs no crucial effort to find truth
If here or there or anywhere about:
We ought to turn each side, try hard and see,
And if we can't, be glad we've earned at least
The right, by one laborious proof the more,
To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage.
Men are not angels, neither are they brutes:
Something we may see, all we cannot see.

Bishop Blougram

—*Bishop Blougram's Apology*

As I dare approach that Heaven
Which has not bade a living thing despair,
Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,
But bids the vilest worm that turns on it
Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not,
But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of souls!

Mildred

—*A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*

To have to do with nothing but the true,
The good, the eternal,—and these, not alone
In the main current of the general life,
But small experiences of every day,
Concerns of the particular hearth and home.

Caponsacchi

—*The Ring and the Book*

There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor, I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopelessly enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvelous change that has happened in his notions of art.

Here's his letter: "He never had a clearly conceived ideal within his brain till to-day.

"Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape: confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics."

Monsignor

—*Pippa Passes*

Gladness be with thee, Helper of our world!
I think this is the authentic sign and seal
Of Godship, that it ever waxes glad,
And more glad, until gladness blossoms, bursts
Into a rage to suffer for mankind,
And recommence at sorrow: drops like seed
After the blossom, ultimate of all.
Say, does the seed scorn earth and seek the sun?
Surely it has no other end and aim
Than to drop, once more die into the ground,
Taste cold and darkness and oblivion there:
And thence rise, tree-like, grow through pain to joy,
More joy and most joy,—do man good again.

Balaustion

—*Balaustion's Adventure*

The power I sought for man, seemed God's.
In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
A strange adventure made me know, one sin
Had spotted my career from its uprise;
I saw Aprile—my Aprile there!
And as the poor melodious wretch disburthened
His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,
I learned my own deep error; love's undoing
Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
And what proportion love should hold with power
In his right constitution; love preceding

Power, and with much power, always much more love;
 Love still too straitened in his present means,
 And earnest for new power to set love free.

Paracelsus

—*Paracelsus*

“Stay!” she said. “Keep at least one soul unspecked
 With crime, that’s spotless hitherto—your own!
 Kill me who court the blessing, who alone
 Was, am, and shall be guilty, first to last!
 The man lay helpless in the toils I cast
 About him, helpless as the statue there
 Against that strangling bell-flower’s bondage: tear
 Away and tread to dust the parasite,
 But do the passive marble no despite!
 I love him as I hate you. Kill me! Strike
 At one blow both infinitudes alike
 Out of existence—hate and love! Whence love?
 That’s safe inside my heart, nor will remove
 For any searching of your steel, I think.”

The Wife

—*A Forgiveness*

She had

A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
 Too easily impressed; she liked whate’er
 She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
 Sir, ’twas all one! My favor at her breast,

The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but
thanked

Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling?

The Duke
—*My Last Duchess*

Oh! to love less what one has injured! Dove,
Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast—
Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength?
Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee?
Bloom o'er my crest, my fight-mark and device!
Mildred, I love you and you love me!

Mertoun
—*A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*

Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them three-fold?
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)

If you get simple beauty and naught else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have
missed,
Within yourself, when you return Him thanks.

Fra Lippo Lippi

—*Fra Lippo Lippi*

What dost thou verily trip upon a word,
Confound the accurate view of what joy is
(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)
With feeling joy? confound the knowing how
And showing how to live (my faculty)
With actually living?—Otherwise
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
Because in my great epos I display
How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act—
Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
Carve the young Phoebus, am I therefore young?
Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself
The many years of pain that taught me art!
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:
But, knowing naught, to enjoy is something too.
Yon rower, with the moulded muscles there,
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
I can write love-odes: thy fair slave's an ode.

I get to sing of love, when grown too gray
For being beloved: she turns to that young man,
The muscles all a-ripple on his back.

Cleon

—*Cleon*

I often am much wearier than you think
This evening more than usual: and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window, with your hand in mine,
And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine, the man's bared breast she curls inside.

Andrea del Sarto

—*Andrea del Sarto*

"Since I could die now of the truth concealed,
Yet dare not, must not die—so seems revealed
The Virgin's mind to me—for death means peace,
Wherein no lawful part have I whose lease
Of life and punishment the truth avowed
May haply lengthen,—let me push the shroud
Away, that steals to muffle ere is just
My penance-fire in snow! I dare—I must

Live, by avowal of the truth—this truth—
I loved you! Thanks for the fresh serpent's tooth
That, by a prompt new pang more exquisite
Than all preceding torture, proves me right!
I loved you yet I lost you! May I go
Burn to the ashes, now my shame you know?"

The Wife
—*A Forgiveness*

Who summoned those cold races that begun
To press on me and judge me? Though I stooped
Shrinking as from the soldiery a nun,
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . . enough!
These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,
Count them for garniture and household stuff,
And where they live needs must our picture live
And see their faces, listen to their prate,
Partakers of their daily pettiness,
Discussed of,—“This I love, or this I hate,
This likes me more, and this affects me less!”
Wherefore I choose my portion. If at whiles
My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint
These endless cloisters and eternal isles
With the same series, Virgin, Babe, and Saint,
With the same cold, calm, beautiful regard,—
At least no merchant traffics in my heart.

Pictor Ignotus
—*Pictor Ignotus*

But this does overwhelm me with surprise,
Touch me to terror—not that faith, the pearl,
Should be let lie by fishers wanting food,—
Nor seen and handled by a certain few
Critical and contemptuous, straight consigned
To shore and shingle for the pebble it proves,—
But that, when haply found and known and named
By thy residue made rich for evermore,
These,—these favored ones, should in a trice
Turn, and with double zest go dredge for welks,
Mud-worms that make the savory soup!

The Pope

—*The Ring and the Book*

Then, Lady Blanche, it less would move

In heart and soul of me disgust
Did you strip off those spoils you wear,
And stand—for thanks, not shillings—bare,
To help Art like any Model there.
She well knew what absolved her—praise

In me for God's surpassing good,
Who granted to my reverent gaze

A type of purest womanhood.
You—clothed with murder of His best
Of harmless beings—stand the test!

What is it you know?

He

—*The Lady and the Painter*

If you loved only what were worth your love,
Love were clear gain and wholly well for you:
Make the low nature better by your throes!
Give earth yourself, go up for gain above.

James Lee's Wife

Little girl with the poor coarse hand
I turned from to a cold clay cast—
I have my lesson, understand
The worth of flesh and blood at last.
Nothing but beauty in a hand?
Because he could not change the hue,
Mend the lines and make them true
To this which met his soul's demand,—
Would Da Vinci turn from you?

James Lee's Wife

Life! Yet the very cup whose extreme dull
Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed, at full,
Aside so oft; the death I fly, revealed
So oft a better life this life concealed,
And which sage, champion, martyr, through each path
Have hunted fearlessly—the horrid bath,
The crippling-irons and the fiery chair.
'T was well for them; let me become aware
As they, and I relinquished life, too! Let
What masters life disclose itself! Forget

Vain ordinances, I have one appeal—
I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel;
So much is truth to me. What Is, then? Since
One object, viewed diversely, may evince
Beauty and ugliness—this way attract,
That way repel,—why gloze upon the fact?
Why must a single of the sides be right?
What bids choose this and leave the opposite?
Where's abstract Right for me?—in youth endued
With Right still present, still to be pursued,
Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife
Each with its proper law and mode of life,
Each to be dwelt at ease in: where, to sway
Absolute with the Kaiser, or obey
Implicit with his serf of fluttering heart,
Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to start
Up, Brutus in the presence, then go shout
That some should pick the unstrung jewels out—
Each, well.

Sordello

—*Sordello*

What my soul? See thus far and no farther? When
doors great and small,
Nine-and-ninety flew open at our touch, should the
hundredth appall?
In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the
greatest of all?
Do I find love so full in my nature God's ultimate gift,

That I doubt His own love can compete with it? Here,
the parts shift?

Here, the creature surpass the Creator—the end, what
began?

Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this
man,

And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet
alone can?

Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will,
much less power,

To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvelous
dower

Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such
a soul,

Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the
whole?

David

—*Saul*

How plainly is true greatness characterized
By such unconscious sport as Luria's here,
Strength sharing least the secret of itself!
Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,
Such save the world which none but they could save,
Yet think whate'er they did, that world could do.

Domizia

—*Luria*

Now, I'll say something to remember.
I trust in nature for the stable laws
Of beauty and utility.—Spring shall plant,
And Autumn garner to the end of time:
I trust in God—the right shall be the right
And other than the wrong, while he endures:
I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
The outward and the inward, nature's good
And God's: so, seeing these men and myself,
Having a right to speak, thus do I speak.
I'll not curse—God bears with them, well may I—
But I—protest against their claiming me.
I simply say, if that's allowable,
I would not (broadly) do as they have done.

Chiappino

—*A Soul's Tragedy*

What's poetry except a power that makes?
And, speaking to one's sense, inspires the rest,
Pressing them all into its service; so
That who sees painting, seems to hear as well
The speech that's proper for the painted mouth;
And who hears music, feels his solitude
Peopled at once—for how count heart-beats plain
Unless a company, with hearts which beat,
Come close to the musician, seen or no?
And who receives true verse at eye or ear,
Takes in (with verse) time, place, and person too,

So, links each sense on to its sister-sense,
Grace-like: and what if but one sense of three
Front you at once? The sidelong pair conceive
Through faintest touch of finest finger-tips,—
Hear, see, and feel, in faith's simplicity,
Alike, what one was sole recipient of:
Who hears the poem, therefore, sees the play.

Balaustion

—*Balaustion's Adventure*

Our duty is to live one life, not two!

Balaustion

—*Balaustion's Adventure*

For all, love greatens and glorifies
Till God's a-glow to the loving eyes,
In what was mere earth before.

James Lee's Wife

Was the trial sore?
Temptation sharp? Thank God a second time!
Why come temptation but for a man to meet
And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
And so be pedestaled in triumph.

The Pope

The moral sense grows but by exercise.
'Tis even as man grew probatively
Initiated in Godship, set to make
A fairer moral world than this he finds.
Guess now what shall be known hereafter.

The Pope

Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will, fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way by a poet now, or a musician—spirits who have conceived and perfected an ideal through some other channel—transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them.

Monsignor
—*Pippa Passes*

He's gone. Oh! I'll believe him every word!
I was so young, I loved him so, I had
No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.
There may be pardon yet; all's doubt beyond.
Surely the bitterness of death is passed!

Mildred

—*A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*

'Tis work for work's sake that man's needing:
Let him work on and on as if speeding
Work's end, but not dream of succeeding.

Pacchiarotto
—*Pacchiarotto*

Saints to do us good
Must be in heaven, I seem to understand.
We never find them saints before at least.

Caponsacchi

—*The Ring and the Book*

I talk impertinently, and you hear
All the same. This it is to have to do
With honest hearts: they easily may err,
But in the main they wish well to truth.

Caponsacchi

—*The Ring and the Book*

Man shrinks to naught
If matched with symbols of immensity;
Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet sky
Or sea, too little for their quietude.

Eglamor

—*Sordello*

Hans must not burn Kant's house above his head
Because he cannot understand Kant's book.
And still less must his pastor burn Kant's self
Because Kant understands some books too well.

Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau (Napoleon III)

—*Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*

Right promptly done is twice right: right delayed
Turns wrong.

Dominus Hyacinthus De Archangelis

—*The Ring and the Book*

There's heaven above, and night by night
I look right through its gorgeous roof;
No suns and moons though e'er so bright
Avail to stop me; splendor-proof
I keep the brood of stars aloof:
For I intend to get to God,
For 'tis to God I speed so fast,
For in God's breast, my own abode,
Those shoals of dazzling glory, passed,
I lay my spirit down at last. Agricola

—*Johannes of Agricola in Meditation*

How inexhaustibly the spirit grows!
One object, she seemed erewhile born to reach
With her whole energies and die content,—
So like a wall at the world's edge it stood,
With naught beyond the world to live for, is that
reached?

Already are new undreamed energies
Outgrowing under, and extending farther
To a new object; there's another world.

Domizia

—*Luria*

Let us not always say
 "Spite of this flesh to-day
 I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
 As the bird wings and sings,
 Let us cry "All good things
 Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh
 helps soul."

Rabbi Ben Ezra

—*Rabbi Ben Ezra*

For more is not reserved
 To man, with soul just nerved
 To act to-morrow what he learns to-day;
 Here, work enough to watch
 The Master work, and catch
 Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

Rabbi Ben Ezra

—*Rabbi Ben Ezra*

To Ancona—Greece—some isle!
 I wanted silence only! there is clay
 Everywhere. One may do whate'er one likes
 In art; the only thing is, to make sure
 That one does like it—which takes pains to know.
 Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad dream!
 Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's friends,
 What the whole world except our love—my own,
 Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,
 Ere night we travel for your land—some isle

With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside—
I do but break these paltry models up
To begin art afresh.

Jules
—*Pippa Passes*

There is no good of life but love, but love!
What else looks good is some shade flung from love—
Love gilds it, gives it worth.

The Queen
—*In a Balcony*

Because not one of Berthold's words and looks
Had gone with love's presentment of a flower
To the beloved; because bold confidence,
Open superiority, free pride—
Love owns not.

Valence
—*Colombe's Birthday*

Hear Cleves!

Whose haggard craftsman rose to starve this day,
Starve now, and will lie down at night to starve,
Sure of a like to-morrow—but as sure
Of a most unlike to-morrow—after—that,
Since end things must, end howsoe'er things may.
What curbs the brute-force instinct in its hour?
What makes—instead of rising, all as one,
And teaching fingers, so expert to wield
Their tool, the broadsword's play or carbine's trick—
What makes that there's an easier help, they think,

For you, whose name so few of them can spell,
Whose face scarce one of them in every hundred saw—
You simply have to understand their wrongs,
And wrongs will vanish—so, still trades are plied,
And swords lie rusting, and myself stand here?
There is a vision in the heart of each
Of justice, mercy, wisdom, tenderness
To wrong and pain, and knowledge of its cure;
And these embodied in a woman's form
That best transmits them, pure as first received,
From God above her, to mankind below.
Will you derive your rule from such a ground,
Or rather hold it by the suffrage, say,
Of this man—this—and this?

Valence

—*Colombe's Birthday*

I answered, "He will come."

And, all day, I sent prayer like incense up
To God the strong, God the beneficent,
God ever mindful in all strife and strait,
Who, for our own good, makes the need extreme,
Till at the last he puts forth might and saves.

Pompilia

—*The Ring and the Book*

Yet seems this patriotism
The easiest virtue for a selfish man
To acquire! He loves himself, and next, the world—
If he must love beyond—but naught between:
As a short-sighted man sees naught midway
His body and the sun above.

Mother

—*Pippa Passes*

Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say,—New truths, old truths! sirs, there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world; we know all we shall ever know: and it is for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients, how we do know this and the other matter, that men get called prophets, poets and the like. A philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard-thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens newly to consider it and view it in a different relation with the others: and so he re-states it, to the confusion of somebody else in good time. As for adding to the original stock of truths,—impossible! Thus, you see the expression of them is the grand business:—you have got a truth in your head about the right way of governing people, and you took a mode of expressing it which now you

confess to be imperfect. But what then? There is truth in falsehood, falsehood in truth. No man ever told one great truth, that I know, without the help of a good dozen of lies at least, generally unconscious ones.

Ogniben

—*A Soul's Tragedy*

Sure he's arrived,
The tell-tale cuckoo—Spring's his confidant,
And he lets out her April purposes!)
Or—better go at once to modern time—
He has—they have—in fact, I understand
But can't restate the matter; that's my boast:
Others could reason it out to you, and prove
Things they have made me feel.

Luigi

—*Pippa Passes*

“Your heart's queen,
you dethrone her?
So should I!”

“’twas mere vanity,
Not love, set that task to humanity!”

The King

—*The Glove*

Be sure they sleep not whom God needs.

Paracelsus

—*Paracelsus*

"Yea, my King,"

I began, "thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts
that spring

From the mere mortal life held in common by man
and by beasts:

In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul
it bears fruit."

David

—*Saul*

Keep but God's model safe, new men will rise,
To take its mould, and other days to prove
How great a good was Luria's glory.

Tiburzio

—*Luria*

How dared I let expand the force
Within me, till some out-soul, whose resource
It grew for, should direct it? Every law
Of life, its every fitness, every flaw,
Must One determine whose corporeal shape
Would be no other than the prime escape
And revelation to me of a Will
Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable
Above, save at the point which, I should know,
Shone that myself, my powers, might overflow
So far, so much; as now it signified
Which earthly shape it henceforth chose my guide,
Whose mortal lip selected to declare

Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear

—The first of intimations, whom to love;

The next, how love him.

Palma

—*Sordello*

You have the fellow-craftsman's sympathy.

There's none cares, like a fellow of the craft,

For the all-unestimated sum of pains

That go to a success the world can see;

They praise then, but the best they never know

—While you know! So, if envy mix with it,

Hate even, still the bottom-praise of all,

Whatever be the dregs, that drop's pure gold!

—For nothing's like it; nothing else records

Those daily, nightly drippings in the dark

Of the heart's blood, the world lets drop away

Forever—so, pure gold that praise must be!

And I have yours, my soldier!

Luria

—*Luria*

How strange!

Look at the woman here with the new soul,

Like my own Psyche—fresh upon her lips

Alit the visionary butterfly,

Waiting my word to enter and make bright,

Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.

This body had no soul before, but slept

Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free

From taint or foul with stain, as outward things
Fastened their image on its passiveness;
Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again!
Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff
Be art—and, further, to evoke a soul
From form be nothing? This new soul is mine!

Jules

—*Pippa Passes*

I am judged.

There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their work drop groundward, but themselves I know
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.

Andrea del Sarto

—*Andrea del Sarto*

All service ranks the same with God:
If now, as formerly he trod;
Paradise, his presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we, there is no last nor first.

Pippa

—*Pippa Passes*

And doth it, not enter my mind (as my warm tears
attest),
These good things given, to go on, and give one more,
the best?
Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at
the height
This perfection,—succeed with life's dayspring, death's
minute of night?
Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul the mis-
take,
Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him
awake
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find
himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new
harmony yet
To be run, and continued and ended—who knows?—
or endure!
The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest
to make sure;
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified
bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by the strug-
gles in this.

David
—*Saul*

The year's at the Spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

Pippa

—*Pippa Passes*

In my own heart love had not been made wise
To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
To see a good in evil, and a hope
In ill-success; to sympathize, be proud
Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts;
All with a touch of nobleness, despite
Their error, upward tending all though weak,
Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
And do their best to climb and get to him.
All this I knew not, and I failed.

Paracelsus

—*Paracelsus*

Whereat the hero, who was truth itself,
Let out the smile again, repressed awhile
Like fountain-brilliance one forbids to play.
He did too many grandnesses, to note
Much in the meaner things about his path:
And stepping there, with face towards the sun,
Stopped seldom to pluck weeds or ask their names.
Therefore he took Admetos at the word:
This trouble must not hinder any more
A true heart from good will and pleasant ways.
And so, the great arm, which had slain the snake,
Strained his friend's head a moment in embrace
On that broad breast beneath the lion's hide,
Till the king's cheek winced at the thick rough gold;
And then strode off, with who had care of him,
To the remote guest-chamber: glad to give
Poor flesh and blood their respite and relief
In the interval 'twixt fight and fight again—
All for the world's sake. Our eyes followed him,
Be sure, till those mid-doors shut us outside.
The king, too, watched great Herakles go off
All faith, love, and obedience to a friend.

Balaustion

—*Balaustion's Adventure*

Let love trust friend, and love demand its like.

Luria

—*Luria*

Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim day boils at last:
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppressed it lay,
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid grey
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the
world.

Pippa

—*Pippa Passes*

All regulated by the single care
I' the last resort—that I made thoroughly serve
The when and how, toiled where was need, reposed
As resolutely at the proper point,
Braved sorrow, courted joy, to just one end:
Namely, that just the creature I was bound
To be, I should become, nor thwart at all
God's purpose in creation. I conceive
No other duty possible to man,—
Highest mind, lowest mind,—no other law
By which to judge life failure or success:
What folk called being saved or cast away!

Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau (Napoleon III)

—*Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*

All that is at all
 Lasts ever, past recall;
 Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure;
 What entered into thee,
 That was, is, and shall be:
 Time's wheel runs back or stops; Potter and clay.

Rabbi Ben Ezra

—*Rabbi Ben Ezra*

He recognized that for great minds i' the world
 There is no trial like the appropriate one
 Of leaving little minds their liberty
 Of littleness to blunder on through life,
 Now aiming at right ends by foolish means,
 Now, at absurd achievement through the aid
 Of good and wise endeavor—to acquiesce
 In folly's life-long privilege, though with power
 To do the little minds the good they need,
 Despite themselves, by just abolishing
 Their right to play the part and fill the place
 I' the scheme of things He schemed who made a like
 Great minds and little minds, saw use for each.

Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau (Napoleon III)

—*Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*

When is man strong until he feels alone?

Valence

—*Colombe's Birthday*

Say not "a small event!" Why "small"?
Costs it more pain than this, ye call
A "great event," should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine one from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in or exceed!

Pippa
—*Pippa Passes*

Overhead the treetops meet,
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;
There was naught above me, naught below,
My childhood had not learned to know:
For, what are the voices of birds
—Ah, and of beasts,—but words, our words,
Only so much more sweet?
The knowledge of that with my life begun.
But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the seven and one,
Like the fingers of my hand:
Nay, I could all but understand
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;
And just when out of her soft fifty changes
No unfamiliar face might overlook me—
Suddenly God took me.

Pippa
—*Pippa Passes*

Conceded! In turn concede to me,

Such things have been as a mutual flame
Your soul's locked fast: but love for a key

You might let it loose, till I grew the same
In your eyes as in mine you stand! Strange plea.

James Lee's Wife

To learn not only by the comet's rush
But a rose's birth,—not by the grandeur, God—
But the comfort, Christ.

Caponsacchi

—*The Ring and the Book*

God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.
No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right

*All service ranks the same with God—
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
Are we: there is no last or first.*

Pippa

—*Pippa Passes*

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